

AUGUST – HANDLING TEMPER TANTRUMS IN THE DEN/PACK

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AMY: Hello, everyone! Welcome to the August CubCast. I'm Amy Hutcherson, Webelos Den Leader and International Scouting Program Specialist with Aaron Derr, Senior Writer for *Boys' Life* Magazine. So, what's up, Aaron?

AARON: Okay, listeners, we've got such an interesting topic this month. It's one thing to figure out what to do when your own child is having a temper tantrum and being disruptive, but what if one of the *other* Cub Scouts is having that tantrum?

AMY: So we invited an expert who literally wrote a book on this subject and she graciously accepted to enlighten us on this delicate topic.

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AMY: The author of the book *Sulky, Rowdy, Rude?: Why Kids Really Act Out and What to Do About It*, is Tina Wiman. And as a den leader myself who has experienced this, we are really excited to explore this further. Welcome to CubCast, Tina.

TINA: Thank you very much. It's good, of you to have me.

AMY: Sure. So, let's get started with finding out why do boys in the Cub Scout age group of 6 and 9 act up?

TINA: There are a lot of things that kids do that simply come down to the fact that they're not adults. Their brains are not finished. They don't have all of

this experience. They have a pretty hard time actually controlling their feeling, and it's just a matter of being a child, really.

AARON: Now, Tina, I am a Cub Scout leader and I have a son who is in my Cub Scout pack, and many times when a boy in our group is having a tantrum, I look around and, who is it, it's my own son. So, how does a parent handle that situation when it's their own child having the tantrum?

TINA: It's both a good thing and a bad thing being the parent because most of the time you have a pretty good idea about what's going on; this is too much or he lost the game or – you can kind of talk yourself through it – but also you still have to be the leader for the others. When you're the parent you have these subtle signs that you can read and see where things are going. So, that the first thing we should do when we this coming is distraction, just redirect the tension because that's usually a very good, way to kind of calm things down and make things calmer. But sometimes, it really does get out of hand really fast and then we need to consider what does this child need in order to regain control. Because the thing about a tantrum is that you're not in control of your actions. That's kind of the problem. You scream or you kick or say things that you don't really mean or that you know that you shouldn't be saying. It's very embarrassing for the child. And so, we need to kind of direct the tension other ways from that as quickly as possible.

AMY: I've actually experienced this; When I am leading my den of boys and the child who's having the tantrum is someone else's child and the parent happens to not be there, how can we handle that differently as a leader?

TINA: It's mostly the same but it doesn't feel exactly like the same because we don't have this authority and we don't have all this knowledge, this personal, really personal relationship with the child. And there is a big risk

that we try to set boundaries or talk them down because we feel insecure and that this situation is just out of control. If we talk too hard to these kids, - these kids are usually pretty sensitive to this kind of aggression or angry voices and angry body language, so we need to take a step back, keep our voices down because there's really a real chance that we just make things worse by being in this conflict. And that's something that I see sometimes, when it's not the parent, it's easier to lose the sense of being in control, and when we lose that sense we try to regain control by controlling the child, and that seldom ends well. It's not a very good idea. So, we need to be even more careful about our body language, about, taking a step back, about thinking, hmm, what, what went down here? What's really wrong? Most of the time we have time before this is a true meltdown to do something about it, and in that moment, we need to stay calm.

AARON: All right, Tina, let me run this one past you. Our dens meet in a school normally. And in that situation, we're surrounded by our fellow Cubs Scouts and families and it's basically all friends. But occasionally we will go on field trips as a den or at pack to outside events. Just the other night our den visited a facility where they do a physical rehabilitation for people who have suffered injuries and we learn how they can do rehabilitation. So, when you go out in public like that and there's a certain standard for behavior, we talk about with the boys, when temper tantrum occurs in a place like that, I would love to hear if you have any thoughts on how to handle that differently. What do you do when you're in the middle of a public library or a fire station or a hospital and you've got a kid who just can't keep it together?

TINA: We need to be prepared.

AARON: Good advice.

TINA: Okay, we're taking these kids somewhere. We need maybe three adults. Maybe there needs to be somebody around that kid that we know may have a tantrum or may have a hard time. The handling itself is not very different whether it's a public area or not. The problem is often that there are a lot of other people around who believe that we should be yelling at the child or telling him to stop. So, we need to make sure that we're protecting the kid from this, because these kids are often very sensitive to feelings. Feelings are very contagious and some kids pick them up easier than others, and if they sense that others are upset or angry with them, they will believe that they have the feelings. Does that make sense?

AARON: Uh-hmm.

TINA: It's like, "oh, somebody is angry. I bet it's me." But we need to clear the area, because this kid is not acting up because they think it's funny or something. It's really a very embarrassing situation for the child. Even strangers should be able to show consideration to children and not make them feel bad about themselves and kind of move away because they are already feeling bad about themselves. But, you know, sometimes people don't. Sometimes they come over and they start talking and I like to just, look them straight in the eye and say, "Hey, I'm handling this."

AMY: I always, like, keep in mind that, when you are dealing with a situation in a public place, nine times out of ten those adults have had to deal with that themselves with their own children or someone they may know, so I

always like to keep in mind, hey, my child isn't the only one that acts like this.

TINA: I went to the mall with one of my children and she had this total breakdown.

AARON: Been there, Tina. Done that.

TINA: Yeah, and suddenly she just ran off and I was like, "Hey, come back here." And this man, he was maybe in his 50s or 60s, turned to me and he kind of smiled and he said, "Oh, you thought that would work, did you? Huge support from somebody who has been there, and that's something I think that we can consider also, when we see these things that give a smile or we just kind of nod and we go like yeah, been there.

AMY: So, Tina, with Cub Scouting in particular and the leader role, does it make a difference if the leader is male or female?

TINA: No, what matters is what kind of leader you are, and the relationship you have with the child. And so, what you need to do is you need to have this personal relationship because even if this child may not do things because a leader tells him to; he might do it because you tell him to because you're his leader. That's very important. We can't really overstate the importance of relationship.

AARON: Tina, are there any resources you could recommend to help Cub Scout leaders to handle a situation like this with children who are not their own?

TINA: There's an American psychologist called Ross Green, and he has some videos on YouTube, and I really like his way of explaining and talking about these kinds of situations and what we can do and how we can react

and how we can think about these things. So, that's readily available for most people. Also, I believe, the Scouting Handbook – is that what it's called – (“*uh-hmm*”) There are very good advice like mix activities, don't sit down all the time, make sure the kids know what they should be doing. There are a lot of things about how to avoid these kinds of situations.

AMY: This is definitely something that leaders aren't looking forward to practicing, (*laughs*) for sure. So, Tina, is there anything else you can add about handling tantrums during a meeting or an outing that you can think of for our listeners?

TINA: There are some occasions that are more probable to go south, and most of the time it's when we're moving from one activity to another or when the kids are not quite sure what they should be doing. So, we need to make sure that every child knows exactly what they should do. Make a structure. create a routine, make it visible for them because kids usually have a hard time discerning that sort of stuff. The child should always know what he's supposed to be doing. If you say like, “Okay, I'm going to tell you about fire rules and you'd better listen up because, you'll be explaining this to this parent here. He'll be waiting in the hallway.” (*Laughter*) Every child will really try to listen because they know that in a minute or so they will be explaining this. They have a task; they have a purpose. So, giving children a sense of structure and of purpose is usually very efficient in not even getting close to tantrums or meltdowns. Think about that; at how we conduct our meetings, how we conduct our outings. It's a very important factor as to how the children will behave. So, when things kind of go wrong, maybe we need to sit down and think, was there something here that I thought that this kid could do that in fact couldn't because he didn't have the skill set? And from there we can change how we do things and maybe the next time it will work out a lot better.

AMY: Taking care of your own child when he's acting out is one thing, but when it's someone else's child it can escalate into a bigger problem if not handled properly. And so, Tina, we thank you so much for this discussion and being on CubCast today.

TINA: Oh, thank you.

AARON: Let's take a short break with a brief Safety Moment, then we'll be back with Reminders and Tips.

(August Safety Moment – Nap On Safely!)

AARON: Okay, here we go with reminders for August. Now is the perfect time to plan for New Leader Training. There is a terrific guide to getting started called "So, You're a New Den Leader." Your pack trainer should be handling most of this, but if you don't have a pack trainer, then the Committee Chair or Cubmaster ought to be planning for New Leader Training. Amy, we were without a pack trainer for a while. It's not fun.

AMY: Oh, I bet.

AARON: So, if you don't have a pack trainer, get a pack trainer. Every boy deserves a trained leader and without training, it's hard to implement a good program.

AMY: It's about time for you to have all your materials ready to go for your first night of recruiting. By now, you should have your youth and adult applications, your *Boy's Life Mini Magazines*, and your First Nighter recruitment kit, as well as any games or props that you might want for that evening.

AARON: Most importantly, make sure you've set a date that First Nighter. Finally, don't forget to pick up your copies of the various den leader guides, and Ceremonies for Dens and Packs. Your council Scout Shop or Trading Post should be able to get you set up with everything you need.

AMY: And be sure to pick up Tina Wiman's book: *Sulky, Rowdy, Rude?: Why Kids Really Act Out and What to Do About It*.

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AMY: So that's a wrap for the August CubCast. Thanks to our guest, Tina Wiman, for joining us.

AARON: And thank you for listening. Are there any other topics we can cover to make your life easier? Just send an email to cubcast@scouting.org. Until next month, I'm Aaron Derr.

AMY: And I'm Amy Hutcherson. Don't forget to tweet your Scouting leadership position or your reason for listening to @cubcast. We want to know. Really, we do!

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